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ABSTRACT

As a follow-up to a 1979 study ("Multiple Accreditation Relationships of Postsecondary Institutions in the United States") by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) this report presents answers to some of the questions raised then. The purpose was to: explore in a longitudinal way most of the major facets of the 1979 study; explore in a more detailed way the phenomenon of multiple relationships; explore the relationship between the accreditation patterns found and the extent of state regulation or control experienced by the institutions; and explore in more detail the increasingly important accreditation relationships of non-regionally accredited proprietary postsecondary institutions. Study procedures and limitations are discussed. Findings are explained by accredited institutions, accreditation relationships of institutions, patterns of accrediting relationships, patterns for accrediting agencies, relationship to level of state regulation, and the national accreditation database. Results indicate: accreditation activity has grown overall since 1978 by one-fourth; regional differences in accreditation patterns persist; the basic patterns of relative extent of accreditation agency activity have been sustained with some shifts; and there is little relationship between extent of state regulation of institutions and the average number of accreditation relationships per institution. 7 references. (SM)

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TRENDS IN THE ACCREDITATION RELATIONSHIPS OF U.S. POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

1978 - 1985

H. R. Kells
and
Richard M. Parrish

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The Council on
Postsecondary Accreditation

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The Council on
Postsecondary Accreditation

Washington, D.C. 1986

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In 1979, the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation published the results of the first national study concerning the extent and patterns of accreditation relationships of U.S. postsecondary institutions. That study, entitled *Multiple Accreditation Relationships of Postsecondary Institutions in the United States*[1], reported several major findings:

- regionally accredited institutions have a wide range of accrediting relationships in a greatly skewed pattern. About 40 percent have no relationship other than that with the regional agency. Fully two-thirds have two relationships or less, and 90 percent have five or less. The 10 percent of the institutions (about 160 in the sample; about 300 in the country) which have greater than five accrediting relationships are predominantly large and offer degrees through the upper end of the degree spectrum.

- there is a strong relationship between the number of accrediting relationships for regionally accredited institutions and the size of the institutions and their highest degree level.

- there are somewhat more accrediting relationships for public institutions than for private institutions.

- very few of the generally small, career-oriented, not regionally accredited institutions are accredited by more than one agency.

- the general patterns and characteristics described above are fairly consistent for each of the regions of the country, but there are some specific regional differences in the patterns.

- ten of the specialized accrediting agencies or areas of activity account for about 75 percent of accrediting relationships held by specialized agencies.

- a longitudinal analysis in one region indicated a modest growth in accrediting relationships (about 20 percent) in the 1970-1978 period. The growth occurred primarily on the lower end of the number of relationships distribution. The number of public institution relationships grew somewhat more than did private institution relationships. Little growth in the number of relationships for larger institutions as a group over time occurred during the period. The number of relationships for the masters/professional category and for the associate degree category grew, while no growth occurred for the doctorate and baccalaureate institutions. A cohort analysis of 19 large universities indicated that during 1970-1978 the median such institution increased by +2 relationships. The range was from -1 to +7 relationships.

The report called for further study of agency and institutional aspects of the pattern of relationships and for work by accrediting agencies on common terms, data needs and training efforts and for conversations about cooperative responses to multiple accreditation situations.

Considerable progress has been recorded on some of the matters relating to the problems some institutions have reported when they are dealing with more than one accrediting, state, or other, agency. COPA's guidelines for cooperation between accrediting agencies[2] have spurred much discussion and some significant cooperative efforts. A COPA project on a common language and categories and definitions for data collection to be used by agencies and institutions[3] has recently been completed, has been enacted by several agencies as the basis for annual reporting by institutions, and should assist over time in the preparation by institutions of common data base elements and data sections for any multiple self-study requirements which they face.

An agenda of studies, developmental activity and conversation remain, however, with regard to the patterns of accreditation activity with colleges, universities and postsecondary training institutions. Little is known in a composite and policy related sense about the trends which have developed since 1978 with respect to differential development of the postsecondary accreditation scene by agency, by type of institution, and by region of the country. The lack of readily available information on these matters is directly related to the lack of a data base accessible for computer analysis. The data which are published annually in the official national list of accredited institutions and programs, *Accredited Institutions of Postsecondary Education* (AIPE)[4], is not currently in a form which can be used by policy or other analysts. More about this later.

The authors felt the need to take the temperature, so to speak, in the mid-1980's of the major matters first explored in the 1979 study, and to proceed to explore some of the items on the research agenda presented in the first study which have become of considerable interest since that time. The current study does not explore all of the interesting questions raised in 1979, but it does present answers to some. Specifically, the purposes of the present study were:

- to explore in a longitudinal way most of the major facets of the 1979 study. What has happened

to these patterns in the seven years which bring us to the middle of the 1980's, particularly in light of the concerns, pressures and changes witnessed in this period?

- to explore in a more detailed way the phenomenon of multiple relationships, particularly from the perspective of the postsecondary institution. What patterns are being experienced in the relationships with individual functional accrediting units? The previous study had grouped several types of functional accrediting units under general umbrella categories and had included at least one major agency which no longer carried out the full accreditation process (i.e., self-study, team visit and written report, institutional response and agency action).

- to explore the relationship between the accreditation patterns found and the extent of state regulation or control experienced by the institutions, and through this to explore somewhat the regional geographic differences found in the previous study.

- to explore in more detail the increasingly important accreditation relationships of non-regionally accredited proprietary, and particularly career training, postsecondary institutions. The early 1980's have seen a significant increase in such accreditation activity by COPA approved agencies which is readily apparent to even the casual reader of the official accreditation list.

Procedures

The data source for this study was the same one employed in the 1979 study, the 1985-86 official list of accredited institutions and any accredited programs published by the American Council on Education for the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation.[4] With the following indicated exceptions, the listings in the source book were coded and entered to a fixed-format data file. Specifically, the listing for each accredited institution was coded in such a way that it was possible to sort the data geographically, by institutional size, by highest degree offered, by institutional sponsorship, and by number and identity of each accreditation relationship. The differences in the coding procedure employed in the current study, as compared with the 1979 study, were as follows:

- as far as possible, each operating accrediting board which sets accreditation schedules and asks for self-studies (that is, must be dealt with by the institution in what we are, thereby, defining as an **accrediting relationship**) and which is defined in the agency listing in *AIPE*[4], was coded as an agency. This is in contrast with the 1979 study in which all of allied health and nursing were each counted as only one agency. After conversation with the Executive Directors of each such agency and with COPA officials, it was determined that each of the allied health review boards and nursing accreditation councils should be coded separately in the current study.

- the 1978 data were also recoded in this more detailed and more truly representative way so a comparable longitudinal study could be affected. In addition, the accrediting relationships of the American Chemical Society were deleted from the 1978 data. This agency was not actively reviewing institutions in the late 1970's in the way we have defined an accrediting relationship, although it was listed in *AIPE*.

- all of the institutions, regionally accredited and not regionally accredited, were coded and entered into the data base for each of the states which were included in the 1979 study. In the previous study, only the regionally accredited institutions were coded and entered into the data base; the non-regionally accredited institutions were counted by hand and thus not included in many of the more detailed analyses.

As in the 1979 study, the institutions in all of the states in four of the accrediting regions were included (New England, Middle States, Northwest and Western). Also, the institutions in a large sample of states from the other two largest regions were included (6 of 17 states in North Central — Colorado, Iowa, Missouri, New Mexico, Ohio, and South Dakota; and 4 of 11 states in the Southern region — Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina and Virginia). The sample states were chosen to represent states with dense and less dense populations and different types of vocational/career and two-year degree institutions.

By combining the data from selected states, according to the definitions developed by Stuart[5], it was possible to examine the relationship of the extent of state control (degree and program approvals, etc.) to the matter of accreditation relationships.

The data for 3,073 institutions, as chosen above, were entered into a computer and analyzed using standard descriptive statistical routines.

Limitations of the Study

Just as in the case of the 1979 study, the data base created for this study, although large, generally re-

liable and obviously quite adequate for the purposes of this study and for other general policy analyses, has certain shortcomings and limitations because of the way the data are listed in *AIPE* and had to be coded by hand on a one-shot basis. First, of course, the data were only as reliable as that provided by the institutions to ACE, as that edited and produced in *AIPE*, and as that coded and entered in the processes of this study. The size of the data base coupled with the general nature of the research question probably help to minimize most of the error so introduced. Second, the format employed by the ACE/COPA book is ambiguous in several ways. For instance, using disciplinary or field designations instead of agency designations introduces error in those fields where more than one agency operates. Additionally, some codes or terms such as that used to designate sponsorship are not always clearly defined in *AIPE*. Finally, some of the listings in the book were incomplete or obviously in error. Where possible, the coders used secondary sources to get such data or to allow the coder to select the coding category with some reasonable assurance.

The reader should be cautioned about using as reliable the **numbers** of relationships by agency or region, etc., presented in this study since some sampling was employed for two of the regions and there were some inconsistencies in the listings of the data source. However, the trends, ratios, proportions, and other relative dimensions presented can reasonably be assumed to be quite representative and reliable because of the consistent application of the coding methods and the comparability of method employed between the 1978 and 1985 data.

The Findings

The patterns found in the 1985 data and the changes in these patterns since 1978 can best be described in terms of what has happened with respect to the number and profile of accredited institutions, the number and profile of accrediting relationships held by these institutions, the relative activity of the various accrediting agencies and, finally, some of the considerations regarding regional differences in the foregoing categories.

Accredited Institutions

Table 1 presents the contrast between the situation in 1978 and that in 1985 with respect to the change (with one exception, growth) in the number of accredited institutions by general type and by region of the country. The major or distinctive aspects of these data are —

- the relatively high growth (40 percent overall) in the category of institutions which are not regionally accredited. These are primarily, but not exclusively, relatively small, profit-seeking schools offering career training on mostly a non-degree basis. Also included are some seminaries and a large number of Bible colleges.

- the considerable regional differences, particularly with respect to the institutions which are not regionally accredited — with very large growth in the urban middle Atlantic states, and very small growth in the more rural south and northwestern regions.

Obviously, the accrediting agencies which work with profit-seeking, career training institutions have become very important regulatory systems, with large demanding workloads, spurred into action by the needs of this rapidly growing segment of U.S. postsecondary education. They are influenced (encouraged, permitted or constrained) by state regulatory mechanisms which, of course, differ greatly from state to state and to some degree collectively by regions.

Within the regionally accredited segment of the institutions (see Table 2), two trends are indicated. The first, similar to that in the not regionally accredited segment, is a large rise in small, non-degree, often career-oriented, institutions, either privately sponsored or publicly financed as in the case of the small vocational institutes in the southern states. The other trend seems to be some movement from the category of baccalaureate degree institutions to the two higher categories of degrees, probably through the addition of masters degree work to those institutions which formerly offered only the baccalaureate, and/or the addition of doctoral work to formerly masters-only institutions. If this is the case, then one has to wonder about the net effect of this aspect of the combined regulatory abilities of the states and voluntary accreditation. In times of fiscal stringency and reduced student markets at almost every level for regionally accredited institutions, for there to be a surge in the accreditation of very small (ostensibly new and presumably the least efficient) institutions, and for there to be a relative rise in the proportion of highest degree schools when most states feel the need to cull such programs and accrediting commissions have stated continued concerns about the quality of offerings at this level, are trends worthy of more scrutiny, at the minimum, and perhaps a cause for some alarm. Despite much good effort and intentions, the question remains whether the system of self-regulation, as it sits in tandem to the state and institutional systems of permissions and prerogative, is able to stave off largely unneeded entrants into certain markets, particularly those entrants which cannot mount serious, well-qualified efforts. Surely, more effort and consideration are

Table 1

Change in the Number of Accredited Institutions by General Type of Accreditation and Geographic Region 1978-1985*

Region/Accreditation Type	1978	1985	% Change
All Institutions	2484	3073	+23.7
Regionally Accredited	1663	1920	+15.5
Not Regionally Accredited	821	1153	+40.4
Geographic Regions			
Middle States (MSA)			
All Institutions	739	1006	+36.1
Regionally Accredited	459	548	+19.4
Not Regionally Accredited	280	458	+63.6
New England (NEA)			
All Institutions	301	356	+18.3
Regionally Accredited	213	240	+12.7
Not Regionally Accredited	88	116	+31.8
North Central* (NCA)			
All Institutions	447	516	+15.4
Regionally Accredited	289	315	+ 9.0
Not Regionally Accredited	158	201	+27.2
Northwest (NWA)			
All Institutions	188	188	0.0
Regionally Accredited	136	133	-2.2
Not Regionally Accredited	52	55	+5.7
Southern* (SACS)			
All Institutions	405	487	+20.2
Regionally Accredited	322	402	+24.8
Not Regionally Accredited	83	85	+2.4
Western (WASC)			
All Institutions	402	488	+21.4
Regionally Accredited	244	282	+15.6
Not Regionally Accredited	158	206	+30.8

*In two of the regions, NCA and SACS, states were sampled -- see PROCEDURES section.

needed on these matters and about the basic criteria of eligibility and acceptability for any new institutions and regarding substantive change in degree level for existing ones. Certainly, there is the possibility that the regulation mechanisms of states and peers stemmed some or even most of the increases proposed by institutions of the types mentioned here. Since there are those that doubt that an adequate level of such control occurs, data aggregated nationwide or regionally about these decisions, which are not available to our knowledge, would seem to be important.

Accreditation Relationships of Institutions

The concern which propelled the construction and analysis of the 1978 and 1985 data bases analyzed in this and its predecessor studies are the number, profile and distribution of accrediting relationships which institutions maintain and continue to develop. This is, of course, related to how (the mechanisms by which) these relationships are maintained and developed, a subject which has been addressed by COPA[2] and one of these authors[6]. This study certainly seems to con-

Table 2

Changes in the Profile of Regionally Accredited Institutions
1978-1985

Institutional Characteristic	1978 Number	1978 %	1985 Number	1985 %	1978 - 1985 % Change
Sponsorship					
Private*	808	(48.6)	944	(49.2)	+ 16.8
Public	855	(51.4)	976	(50.8)	+ 14.2
Total	1663	(100.0)	1920	(100.0)	+ 15.4
Size (# Students)					
1-1000	554	(33.3)	687	(35.8)	+ 24.0
1001-5000	679	(40.8)	792	(41.3)	+16.6
5001-10,000	233	(14.0)	235	(12.2)	+ 0.9
Over 10,000	197	(11.9)	206	(10.7)	+ 4.6
Total	1663	(100.0)	1920	(100.0)	+ 15.4
Highest Degree					
Non Degree	71	(4.3)	162	(8.4)	+128.2
Associate	573	(34.5)	633	(33.0)	+ 10.5
Baccalaureate	395	(23.8)	374	(19.5)	+ 5.3
Masters/Professional	386	(23.2)	453	(23.6)	+ 17.4
Doctorate	238	(14.3)	298	(15.5)	+25.2
Total	1663	(100.0)	1920	(100.0)	+ 15.4

*Includes non-profit and proprietary independent institutions.

firm that the general level of accrediting relationships per institution discerned in the 1978 data and published in 1979 by COPA[1] have been sustained in 1985. As is depicted in Table 3, the overall averages for all institutions and for institutions not regionally accredited were sustained in 1985 at the 1978 level despite the fact that the number of accrediting relationships increased 23 and 41 percent respectively. As indicated by the data presented previously, this can be explained by the growth in the number of small, low relationship institutions (most with only one accrediting relationship) and a corresponding increase in the number of relationships for existing, mostly large institutions. The latter caused an increase of about eight percent in the average for the regionally accredited institutions, bringing that national average extrapolated to the 3,300 such institutions to a shade under three relationships per institution.

Some regional differences are seen in the data in Table 3. In the northwestern states, at a time when the rest of the country experienced growth in accredited institutions and relationships, no increase was experienced in the former, and drops occurred in the number of regionally accredited institutions, the number of accrediting relationships at both major types of institutions and in the average number of relationships per institution. In the south, increases only occurred in the regionally accredited segment. In the Middle States region, while both institutional segments showed increases, the large increase occurred in the not regionally accredited group. In most other ways, the data clustered closely around the respective national and group norms.

In 1985, then, with relatively little variation by region, U.S. regionally accredited institutions have on the average about three accrediting relationships (the median is closer to two), and those not regionally accredited have a shade over one relationship.

The Pattern of Accrediting Relationships

The general pattern of accrediting relationships reported for the 1978 data was found to be sustained in the 1985 data for both regionally accredited and not regionally accredited institutions. The range on the former is wide, from 1 to almost 30 relationships, with heavy skew in the distribution to the lower frequency;

Table 3

Change in the Number of Accrediting Relationships by Region
and Average Number of Accrediting Relationships Per Institution
1978-1985

Accreditation Type by Region	Number of Relationships			Average Number of Relationships Per Institution	
	1978	1985	% Change	1978	1985
Regionally Accredited Institutions					
Middle States	1266	1616	**+27.7**	2.76	2.95
New England	518	634	**+22.4**	2.43	2.64
North Central	900	1145	**+27.2**	3.11	3.63
Northwest	446	434	**- 2.7**	3.28	3.26
Southern	786	1056	**+34.4**	2.44	2.67
Western	664	763	**+14.9**	2.72	2.71
Subtotal	4580	5648	**+23.3**	2.75	2.94
Not Regionally Accredited Institutions					
Middle States	297	495	**+66.7**	1.06	1.08
New England	91	120	**+31.9**	1.02	1.03
North Central	164	222	**+35.4**	1.04	1.10
Northwest	60	58	**- 3.3**	1.13	1.06
Southern	89	88	**- 1.1**	1.06	1.04
Western	187	237	**+26.7**	1.19	1.15
Not in a U.S. Region	N/A*	32	—	—	1.00
Subtotal	888	1252	**+41.0**	1.08	1.09
Total for All Institutions	5468	6900	+26.2	2.20	2.25

*Not available

Table 4

Distribution of Regionally Accredited Institutions
According to Number of Accreditation Relationships by Region
1978 and 1985

Number of Accreditation Relationships By Year	Percentage of Institutions Having the Given Number of Relationships By Regional Affiliation						
	MSA	NEA	NCA	NWA	SACS	WASC	TOTAL
One relationship							
1978	38.1	46.0	31.8	36.8	54.7	43.9	**42.0**
1985	36.7	40.8	27.9	40.6	52.2	47.5	**40.9**
Two-five relationships							
1978	53.3	46.5	56.5	49.3	38.2	47.1	**48.8**
1985	51.5	49.7	56.6	48.0	38.8	43.2	**48.0**
More than five relationships							
1978	8.6	7.5	11.4	13.9	7.1	9.0	**9.2**
1985	11.8	9.5	15.5	11.4	9.0	9.3	**11.1**

40 percent have only 1 relationship. The range for the not regionally accredited is small, from 1 to 4 relationships, with a very heavy skew to the bottom of the range; 90 percent have only 1 relationship. (See Tables 4 and 5.)

The seven year period between 1978 and 1985 has seen a small shift in the profile of the regionally accredited institutions (Table 4). The shift in the average number of relationships reported earlier was obviously propelled by a slight decrease in the proportion of institutions having only one relationship to 40 percent, and an increase from 9 to 11 percent in the proportion of institutions with greater than 5 relationships. The latter category, of course, is of considerable interest to professional accreditation staff members. In response to the 1979 report, many of these professionals rejoiced... "we knew it all along", "glad to see my basic instincts confirmed that only 10 percent of the institutions have greater than 5 relationships"...were their comments to these authors. However, these authors once again must protest. We remind those who find relief in these data, that the 11 percent of about 3,300 non-profit regionally accredited institutions is in fact over 300 of the largest, mostly public universities and community colleges which educate a large proportion of the U.S. student body and conduct probably 90 percent of all the research in U.S. postsecondary institutions. Three hundred institutions with at least five relationships means far greater than 1,500 accrediting relationships for the colleges, schools or programs involved within these institutions. Unnecessary diversion and any duplication of effort at this level can have deleterious effects on the programs and on the study and planning cycles of these large institutions. We are sustained in our feelings that the procedures employed by some agencies to seek accommodation of scheduling and common self-study efforts are crucial to the well-being of these large important U.S. institutions. COPA obviously officially agrees with this position[2] and continued focus on this matter is called for.

Regional differences are quite obvious in the profile of relationships. In the regionally accredited segment, the proportion of institutions with only 1 relationship ranges across the regions from 28 percent to 52 percent in 1985 and in the not regionally accredited segment from 88 to about 96 percent. In the former group, the region with the lowest proportion on the low end of the scale (North Central) also has the highest proportion on the high end. This region, of course, has a relatively high proportion of its institutions as large, broad spectrum, graduate level institu-

Table 5

Distribution of Not Regionally Accredited Institutions
According to Number of Accreditation Relationships by Regions
1978 and 1985

Number of Accreditation Relationships By Year	Percentage of Institutions Having the Given Number of Relationships by Regional Affiliation						
	MSA	NEA	NCA	NWA	SACS	WASC	TOTAL
One relationship							
1978	94.3	97.8	94.9	90.6	95.2	80.9	92.1
1985	94.5	95.7	91.0	94.5	96.5	87.9	93.1
Two relationships							
1978	5.4	2.2	5.1	5.7	3.6	19.1	7.4
1985	3.0	4.3	7.5	3.5	3.5	9.7	5.2
Three relationships							
1978	0.4	0	0	3.8	1.0	0	0.5
1985	2.2	0	1.5	0	0	1.9	1.5
Four relationships							
1978	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1985	0.2	0	0	0	0	0.5	0.2

Note: None of the institutions have more than four relationships.

Table 6

Agencies With the Largest Changes in the Number of Accrediting Relationships
Arranged by Type of Agency

Agency	1978	1985	Change	% Change
National Institutional				
AICS	327	423	+ 96	+29.4
NATTS	345	506	+161	+46.7
Regional Institutional				
MSA	459	548	+ 89	+ 19.4
SACS	322	402	+ 80	+ 24.8
Specialized Programmatic				
Allied Health	452	819	+362	+ 81.2
Med. Lab. Tech.	58	193	+135	+232.8
Med. Asst.	43	71	+ 28	+ 65.1
Radiology	122	173	+ 51	+ 41.8
Resp. Therapy	70	123	+ 53	+ 75.7
Nursing	362	495	+133	+ 36.7
Associate	182	230	+ 46	+ 25.0
Baccalaureate/Masters	178	242	+ 64	+ 40.0
Social Work	156	208	+ 52	+ 33.3
Education	288	265	- 23	- 8.0
Rehabilitation Therapy	16	47	+ 31	+193.8

tions and this is reflected in the data here and in the average number of relationships reported in Table 3. The region which seems to be significantly different in the Table 5 data is the Western region. A higher proportion of the not regionally accredited institutions in this region, dominated by California, have greater than one agency relationship. California is a highly competitive market with comparatively lower state regulation of the institutions within its boundaries.

Patterns for Accrediting Agencies

The data concerning relative level of activity among the COPA approved accrediting agencies and the largest changes in activity since 1978 are presented in Tables 6 and 7. Clearly, some agencies have grown considerably and much more than others in the number of accreditation relationships. The largest proportionate increases occurred in the national institutional categories (particulary NATTS), in the allied health areas (particulary the medical laboratory technician, medical assistant, radiology and respiratory therapy review boards) and in the nursing, social work and rehabilitation therapy agencies. Education accrediting activity decreased.

Some of these changes are reflected in the otherwise relatively stable 1978 and 1985 rankings of most active specialized agencies. The two most active nursing councils, social work, and some of the allied health review boards moved up in the 1985 top rankings. The comparisons for those agencies working with not regionally accredited institutions are not as clear because some of the 1978 data (allied health and nursing) remain grouped in ways which obscure the level we are examining in 1985 and because of the confusion between discipline and agency labels in the *AIPE* listings. Clearly, NATTS and AICS are by far the most active agencies. The former has over 900 accredited institutions nationwide in 1986[7].

Relationship to Level of State Regulation

State regulation of institutions is an important complementary regulatory function to voluntary accreditation, and the relationship between the two has received relatively little empirical study. Because the COPA accreditation data provide the basis for at least

Table 7

Rank Order List of Accreditation Agencies
According to Volume of Accrediting Activity
1978 and 1985

	Specialized Agencies Working With Regionally Accredited Institutions		Agencies Working With Institutions Not Regionally Accredited	
Ranking	1978	1985	1978	1985
1	**NCATE (Education)**	(1)* NCATE	**NATTS**	NATTS
2	**NASM (Music)**	(1)* NASM	**AICS**	AICS
3	**ABET (Engineering)**	NLN-Bacc./Masters Degree	**Allied Health (All)**	NHSC (Home Study)
4	**ADA (Dentistry)**	ABET	**NHSC-Home Study**	Practical Nursing
5	**NLN-Assoc. (Nursing)**	NLN-Associate Degree	**Theology**	Medical Asst.
6	**NLN-Bacc./Mast. (Nursing)**	Social Work	**Nursing (All)**	ABHES-Health Ed.
7	**CSWE (Social Work)**	Dentistry	**AABC (Bible College)**	Theology
8	**AACSB (Business)**	CAHEA-Med. Tech.	**Law**	AABC (Bible College)
9	**CAHEA-Radiol. (Rad. Tech.)**	CAHEA-Radiol.	**- Others -**	Rabbi. Talmudic Ed.
10	**ABA/AALS (Law)**	Business		- Others -

*Tie for top ranking

a general study of this relationship, and because these authors wished to pursue further some of the bases for the regional differences seen in the 1978 and 1985 data, it was decided to tabulate the data in such a way that some of the relationship between state regulation and voluntary accreditation patterns could be displayed. Using the definitions developed by Stuart[5], the data for a group of high regulation (extent of program approval, extent of program review, strength and breadth of institutional licensing procedures, etc.) and low regulation states were analyzed and the data are displayed in Tables 8 and 9.

Using the average number of accreditation relationships per institution as a criterion, there appears to be no difference between the two regulatory categories across the sample and across the two major types of accreditation relationships. There does appear to be a notable difference with respect to sponsorship of the institutions. Since state regulatory activity is primarily expressed with respect to public institutions, the larger averages for the public regionally accredited institutions in low control states where more programmatic proliferation may exist seems logical. But by and large, this attempt to examine the accreditation data teaches us relatively little about the relationship between the complex and very diverse patterns of state regulation and the accreditation patterns we have observed.

The National Accreditation Data Base

These authors have become painfully aware that for all intents and purposes there does not exist a useful, reliable, accessible, computer manipulable data base about accreditation. On two occasions, in 1978 and in 1986, it was necessary to undertake a massive coding operation in order to create a data base for our studies based on a published list of accredited institutions by state, a list which understandably, because of the methods used in its creation, has inconsistencies, ambiguities and a high degree of omissions and errors. But, perhaps most importantly, the lack of a computer-based, regularly updated, manipulable data base means that all of the constituencies which need data about this important area in order to make plans and decisions — COPA, the states, accrediting agencies, state systems, large institutions and any researchers — do not have useful access to most information about accreditation patterns and activities.

We propose that COPA seek the funding to create such an ongoing data base to meet these important and diverse needs and that, at the minimum, the data base include **for each accredited institution:**

- **accreditations listed by field accredited and agency doing the accreditation.** (*AIPE* presently uses only field, which is ambiguous

since some fields are accredited by more than one agency.)

- **more detailed institutional characteristics** (cf. sponsorship information about which institutions are proprietary, and more useful enrollment data).
- **date of original, most recent and next expected accreditation review for each agency accrediting each institution.**

Finally, we suggest that *AIPE* which, of course, could be created at will from the data base, include, in addition to the information mentioned above, tabulations and lists by agency, by region, by state and national summary statements by agency for all to use about accreditation. Such could be produced readily, of course, from a computer-based data base. And, finally, those interested in this aspect of accreditation would need suffer no further with Kells and Parrish studies.

Table 8

Average Number of Accreditation Relationships For All Institutions and For Regionally Accredited Institutions In a Sample of States As a Function of Level of State Control
1985

Institutional Characteristics	Low Control States*	High Control States
All Institutions	2.13	2.10
Sponsorship		
Public	3.45	2.94
Private	1.48	1.84
Size		
1-1000	1.25	1.22
1001-5000	2.10	2.06
5001-10,000	3.15	3.57
Over 10,000	5.55	7.86
Highest Degree		
No Degree	1.14	1.05
Associate	1.97	1.95
Baccalaureate	1.54	1.73
Masters/Professional	3.17	2.35
Doctorate	5.12	5.52
All Regionally Accredited Institutions	2.93	2.95
Sponsorship		
Public	3.48	3.14
Private	2.14	2.82
Size		
1-1000	1.49	1.66
1001-5000	2.33	2.22
5001-10,000	3.15	3.66
Over 10,000	5.55	8.00
Highest Degree		
No Degree	1.00	1.00
Associate	2.07	2.35
Baccalaureate	1.70	1.75
Masters/Professional	3.44	2.64
Doctorate	5.27	6.00

*As defined in Stuart[3]. Low control states: California, Idaho and Colorado; High control states: Connecticut, New York and Pennsylvania.

Table 9

Average Number of Accreditation Relationships
For Institutions Not Regionally Accredited In a Sample of States
As a Function of Level of State Control
1985

Institutional Characteristics	Low Control States*	High Control States
All Not Regionally Accredited Institutions	1.13	1.07
Sponsorship		
Public	1.00	1.00
Private	1.14	1.07
Size		
1-1000	1.14	1.06
1001-5000	1.11	1.14
5001-10,000	--	1.00
Over 10,000	--	1.00
Highest Degree		
No Degree	1.14	1.05
Associate	1.13	1.18
Baccalaureate	1.10	1.00
Masters/Professional	1.00	1.00
Doctorate	1.00	1.13

*As defined by Stuart[3]. Low control states: California, Idaho and Colorado; High control states: Connecticut, New York and Pennsylvania

Summary and Conclusions

The results of the analysis of the large 1985 sample of accreditation data and the comparisions with similar data from 1978 may be summarized as follows:

1. Accreditation activity has grown overall in the U.S. in the seven years since 1978 by about one-fourth, and some parts, particularly those relationships with institutions which are not regionally accredited (usually small career, often profit-seeking) have grown by 40 percent. Similarly, accreditation of small and non-degree, career-oriented regionally accredited institutions has also grown considerably. The proportion of regionally accredited institutions which offer graduate degrees has advanced faster than the norm.

2. Regional differences in accreditation patterns persist with respect to several aspects of the profile of accrediting relationships.

3. In 1985, the average regionally accredited institution has three accreditation relationships in a range from 1 to about 30 relationships (the median institution has about 2). The institution which is not regionally accredited has on the average one relationship. Indeed, 93 percent have only 1 relationship and the range is only from 1 to 4 relationships. There has been a very slight shift downward in the proportion of regionally accredited institutions with only one relationship and a slight shift upward (to 11 percent) in the proportion of institutions (large, mostly research universities) having more than 5 relationships.

4. The basic patterns of relative extent of accreditation agency activity have been sustained with some shifts. The activity of agencies in the allied health, nursing, social work and rehabilitation therapy areas has increased substantially, relative to the other agencies, and that of education, has decreased – all with respect to relationships with regionally accredited institutions. For the not regionally accredited, the activity of NATTS and AICS has increased considerably.

5. Little relationship, if any, was found between extent of state regulation of institutions and

the average number of accreditation relationships per institution for the sample of states selected.

Finally, these authors have, based on their experience in two major studies concerning national accreditation data, argued for the construction by COPA of an ongoing, computer-based, accessible data base to become the source of the published accreditation list and more importantly to provide the capability to conduct at several levels of activity (national, regional, state, agency, institutional and individual researcher) policy analysis and, where appropriate, resulting policy decisions. Suggestions about format were made.

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